

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 586

By Crutchfield

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mr. Jim Oliver of Monteagle.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Jim Oliver of Monteagle; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oliver was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, an astute businessman, Jim Oliver was the founder and president of the highly acclaimed Jim Oliver's Smoke House, Lodge and Trading Post in Monteagle, a true Tennessee institution; and

WHEREAS, born on August 4, 1937, Mr. Oliver was the son of Irene Allie Phipps Oliver and Robert Cheatum Oliver of Pelham, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the roots of Jim Oliver's success as a restaurant entrepreneur can be traced back to his return to Tennessee in 1960, after spending seven years in Cleveland, Ohio working in the steel forges, with the intent to open his own business; and

WHEREAS, with \$200 he rented an existing business, the Bee Hive Drive-In; he struggled for the first six months before business began to boom, as the Bee Hive established a reputation for great burgers and barbeque, cold beer, and great company; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, Jim Oliver purchased the venerable Monteagle Diner with his brother Melvin, once again enjoying great success operating a restaurant; in 1973 the brothers would go their separate ways with Jim selling his interest to Melvin; and

WHEREAS, Jim Oliver had always dreamed of building a country-themed establishment that would serve the wonderful food he enjoyed as a young boy growing up in Payne's Cove, Tennessee, such as country ham, barbeque, smoked meats, fresh vegetables, fruit cobblers, hot biscuits, and other dishes from his mother's recipes and his own; and

WHEREAS, with financial backing from partners John Stamps and Sam Lewis, he realized his dream in November of 1975 with the opening of Jim Oliver's Smoke House Restaurant, Trading Post, and Gift Shop; and

WHEREAS, the original restaurant seated just 95 people with a small gift shop inside, and the Antique Mall, now the Trading Post, contained 10,000 square feet of space available for rent to antique dealers; and

WHEREAS, after operating the Smoke House Restaurant and Gift Shop from 1975 to 1978, he would subsequently convert the Antique Mall into retail shops and eventually converted the space into one large gift shop in 1980; and

WHEREAS, Jim Oliver was aided by his brother, Bernie who served as manager, and later his son, James David Oliver, and numerous other family members, including sisters, wives, cousins, nieces, and nephews, helped out over the years; the successful Smoke House mail order business was established by James David and Hank Landers, selling smoked meats, jams, jellies, pickles and other country items around the globe; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Mr. Oliver became the sole owner of the Smoke House, buying out partner John Stamps after having previously bought out partner Sam Lewis in 1980; he soon embarked upon expanding his business by building a meeting space facility and a companion lodging facility; and

WHEREAS, with the creation of the Lodge, from its original units to its later expansion into rustic cabins, Jim Oliver once again quickly established an extremely successful venture, making the Smoke House a destination for visitors from across the country who enjoyed the great food, wonderful amenities, and scenic mountain beauty; and

WHEREAS, joining Best Western Corporation in 1999, Jim Oliver's Best Western Lodge offers 99 rooms and 14 rustic cabins that remain in constant demand as the facility hosts banquets, reunions, retreats, and receptions in the Irene Oliver Conference Center, with weddings being held at the nearby Monteagle Wedding Chapel; and

WHEREAS, today the Smoke House Restaurant still prepares an estimated 500,000 meals annually, sharing the "old country" cooking loved by Mr. Oliver and the recipes of his mother, Mama Irene Oliver, that are used by his cooks to this day; and

WHEREAS, Jim Oliver always sought to run his business as a family-owned operation that treated all its guests like part of the family; Jim Oliver and his wonderful Smoke House operation became a beloved family destination for many Tennesseans who considered him a special part of their family; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oliver was deeply devoted to his family and is survived by his two sisters, Geneva Grace Patterson and Joann Pace; two brothers, Robert Melvin Oliver and Bernard Cheatum Oliver; his life partner, Gwendolyn Gipson; his three children, James David Oliver, Betsy Jane Oliver, and Nancy Lea Oliver; his former wife, Bettye Janice Ross Oliver; two step-children, Kimberly Suzanne Gipson and Beau Gary Gipson; step-granddaughter, Shana Leigh True; and his beloved pet, Gizzie; and

WHEREAS, Jim Oliver leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional businessman, public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Jim Oliver, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Oliver.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.